

Churchgoing Men Would Appreciate Less Cleavage in Church Too

On Thursday, my editor and Christian sister Jennifer LeClaire wrote an opinion piece for *Charisma* titled, “Why Do So Many ‘Born-Again, Spirit-Filled Women’ Show off Cleavage in Church?” As many of you who read *Charisma* know, Jennifer’s opinion pieces often garner a great deal of attention, and this one certainly wasn’t any different.

As of early Friday afternoon, the column had gotten more than 15,000 hits and nearly 100 comments from our readers—some of them flattering and some of them not-so-flattering. Many have chastised Jennifer for being judgmental about what she said in the article.

If you know Jennifer and you know where her heart is, you wouldn’t think that for a second. Jennifer is one of the most on-fire-for-God and tuned-into-the-Holy-Spirit people I’ve ever known. I know what she wrote came from the heart and was God-inspired.

I’m sure not many of you know me, as I’ve only been at *Charisma* for a year. But I’m going to follow up on Jennifer’s article, and this time from a man’s point of view.

Jennifer pointed out that she is “talking about so-called ‘mature believers,’ not lost souls or baby Christians [that] come into God’s sanctuary on Sunday morning wearing clothes you might rather expect to see them wearing at a dance club on Saturday night.” She wrote, “I’m talking about those who claim to be ‘born-again, baptized, blood-bought’ (even tongue-talking) members of the church!”

I’ve attended many churches where I have seen this. This is

even an issue in my own church. I'm not quite sure what the rest of the women in the congregation think, but my wife is absolutely amazed when she sees women who are dressed as described above.

I can't pretend to think like a woman or know what is in their hearts. However, I will say this, and I'm going to be as transparent as I possibly can in this forum: I'm not sure that many women understand or even think about the consequences of the way they dress in church (or on the street, for that matter) as it pertains to the men of their congregation. I'm not sure that they understand that lust of the eyes is something we men struggle with every day, all the time.

Every day, we are bombarded with images of scantily dressed beautiful women in society from advertising in every possible medium. It's difficult to escape it, and society doesn't care because they're only trying to sell their products and make their companies more attractive to the consumer.

The last thing we need is to walk into church—a place where we have come to worship God freely and love Him with all of our hearts—and to have our attention diverted by the way some women are dressed. And not to mention if you happen to look at a women dressed that way and you're with your wife, how does that make her feel? You know she's thinking, "So, I guess that's attractive to you, and I'm not?"

I know exactly what a lot of you are going to say. I can hear it now: "Well, that's your problem. If you can't divert your eyes from a woman like that, then you have a big-time problem with your heart, and you don't really love your wife or God."

My retort to that would be: Any man who says he isn't at least slightly affected by a scantily dressed woman—as described by Jennifer in her article—is either a eunuch, gay or someone who isn't telling the truth.

The problem isn't that we don't love our wives. I certainly

do, and I know most men love their wives and wouldn't do anything in the world to hurt their feelings or self-esteem. And as Christians, we love God with all of our heart (at least I hope we do).

No, the problem is found in the fact that we are only human, and we're going to be tempted to at least look. Again, men, don't tell me that you don't.

And when we do look, we could find ourselves guilty of lust in our heart. Matthew 5:27-28 says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

You never know what it could lead to. You look at the above-mentioned women and that image won't leave your mind. You go home and get on the Internet, and then who knows what can happen? Even mature Christian men can get sidetracked by lustful desires. James 1:14-15 says, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

At a recent meeting of my men's group at my home, we talked about this and how much of a problem it is and how much we struggle with it—and I'm talking about a group of guys who love Jesus and want to serve Him with all their heart. But we were all transparent, and we all want to be held accountable for our actions and what's in our hearts. If I've got a problem, then I want someone to tell me about it so I can go to God in prayer and fix it.

So, what is the solution? I believe it can be found in Romans 14:13, which says, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

Mark 9:42 says, "But whoever causes one of these little ones

who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.” And then there’s Luke 17:1, which states, “Then He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!’”

It’s like drinking alcohol in front of an alcoholic or taking a man who has trouble with pornography or is struggling in his marriage out to lunch at Hooters. It simply shouldn’t be done.

I do want our women readers to know that I am not putting the blame completely on them. Men should be responsible for their own actions, and they will be responsible to God for what they’ve done ultimately. My point is that women shouldn’t exacerbate the problem by dressing immodestly. Yes, we have to pray that God shows us a way to “divert our eyes” and to be sexually pure. But I do believe that women need to keep in mind what they do can have a huge impact on us.

Some women may not care, and simply push the blame all off on men. I’ve seen it in some of these comments. They don’t they need to be responsible for their actions. But there are other women that have commented that do care and they are gracious and realize that it is a two-way street. That’s what everybody has to keep in mind – that indeed it is a two-way street.

To our female readers, I’m not demanding anything from you. What you do is certainly between you and God, and I realize that you’re there to worship too. However, I am asking that you search your hearts. If anything I’ve said resonates with you and you realize that how you dress can cause a man—any man, even your pastor—to stumble, then please rethink your wardrobe before you walk out the door (not just on Sunday morning, either).

As someone who has struggled with the subject and knows many who have (again, transparency), we would appreciate a little more modesty.

Shawn A. Akers *is an associate editor for Charisma Media.*